

Dear Congressman Wolf:

I have read your proposal for the formation of an Afghanistan/Pakistan Study Group with deep personal interest and approbation. I applaud its respectful, well-reasoned, bipartisan approach to rethinking the war in Afghanistan. The following are my personal thoughts regarding this war. Please accept them as the insights of an average American mother.

It has been troubling to me how distant this war is for so many Americans. Many are only vaguely aware of the events taking place, other than perhaps the recent increase in the number of casualties. Even gathering information of what is daily happening in Afghanistan hasn't been easy. I comb the internet daily searching many different online news sources in an attempt to be informed. Our country is at war and yet so often the top news items contain nothing regarding it. Often it is the local papers in towns with soldiers, sailors and marines serving in Afghanistan that contain the most news. Other times it is the news stations with an embedded reporter who will have a flurry of articles while the reporter is there but then nothing once they return.

The War on Terror is not just impersonal news but it is a war that strikes very close to home. My father has a dear friend whose son-in-law died in the Twin Towers. I have a friend who lost a son in Iraq during the battle for Fallujah. A student of mine lost her fiancée in the war. My children and son-in-law have served in both Iraq and Afghanistan and have buddies injured or killed in action.

One of my daughters is currently serving in Afghanistan in a Combat Support Hospital. She arrived in time to experience first hand the peak number of casualties in June and July. In a recent news interview her Commanding Officer said they are seeing an almost constant stream of casualties; something that none of them were prepared for, but will remember the horrors of the rest of their lives.

It has sometimes appeared that the efforts in Afghanistan have trudged along, with success measured in part by the areas in which we have gained some measure of control versus the price paid in human lives both civilian and military. The casualties suffered aren't just numbers to me; each name, each face, represents a family who is paying the ultimate price, the loss of a son or daughter, brother or sister, father or mother; a family that will never be the same. Therefore, I wholeheartedly support the formation of an Afghanistan/Pakistan Study Group in the hope that it will help to turn the tide of this war and lessen the number of casualties as well.

I, too, have a deep respect and confidence in Gen. Petraus and would not want my comments to be construed as being critical of the leadership of our military. I have no formal training in political science or history so please accept these comments as simply the perspective of an American mother with children glad to serve our country.

God bless you and give you wisdom as you serve in the leadership of our country.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

PS It meant so much to see my sons receive a standing ovation when introduced during last weeks luncheon. It is these very Lance Corporals, Corporals and Sergeants who are almost daily listed among the casualties. My son, [REDACTED], remarked that listening to your speech "restored his faith in the republic". Thank you again for recognizing their service.